

# THE BLACK HILLS Gold Fields

## —and— HOW TO REACH THEM!

With Map of distances, and fares from the  
various points; also

### Cost of Outfit, and full Information of the Country

BY ONE WHO HAS BEEN THERE.

It has long been understood that the Black Hills were rich in precious minerals, pine lands, etc. There has been more or less excitement over the reports brought from there every year as far back as 1865, and indeed as far back as the earliest settlement of the Upper Missouri Valley. These

#### PERIODICAL OUTBREAKS

were occasioned by the partial explorations of government under Warren, Reynolds, Hayden and others, coupled with the numerous stories of old miners, trappers and Indians. Numerous expeditions have been formed, at various points, including Sioux City, Yankton, St. Louis, etc., to enter the hills, but the opposition of the government and the hostility of the Indians, coupled with the uncertainty that existed as to the character of the country, have so far intervened to bring them all to an untimely end, except the small expedition that left Sioux City in October last and is now in that country, and from which Gordon and Witcher are lately returned.

The present feeling is attributable to

#### THE EXPEDITION OF CUSTER

last summer, and the reports of Custer and Forsyth, confirming all that was previously supposed true of the Black Hills. There was much excitement last fall, after the return of Custer, and only the approach of winter and the stringent orders of the government against the admission of whites into the hills, prevented a flood of immigration at that time.

In spite of the lateness of the season, however, and all else that opposed, a party of twenty-five, including one woman and a child, fitted out in Sioux City, and quietly, on the 6th of October, started on the long journey, the fact of their departure being known to but few. The party arrived in Custer Park on the 23d day of December, and proceeded to prepare shelter and the protection of a stockade. On the 3d of February Messrs. Gordon and Witcher left their companions to return to Sioux City, to report progress, and prepare the way for reinforcements. Their story is simply confirmatory of the reports that followed the return of the Custer expedition and of the previous reports of the government geologists. Indeed, Gordon and Witcher have said nothing approaching the extravagance of language, used by Custer, or, yet by Hayden.

#### JOHN GORDON

is a man not given to flights of fancy. He is a small lithe man, dark complexioned, about 35 years of age, and of large experience on the frontier. He is very matter of fact in his ways and speech, and old residents of Sioux City, who have known him many years, will tell you with considerable earnestness, that what John Gordon says, you may tie to. It is a fact, at least, that some of the hifalutin telegrams, that have been sent, have been very offensive to him, and he has said over and over that he just wants the truth and nothing more, and he shows particularity about this in all cases, where his name is used.

Gordon is to take the first train out from Sioux City. It is advertised to leave about the 5th of April. The Sioux City and Black Hills Transportation Company, which will work what is called the Sioux City route, is composed of some of the best and wealthiest citizens of that place, and they say:

#### THEY "MEAN BUSINESS."

The train that Gordon will take out will belong to this company. Horses, mules, wagons, etc., are now being purchased.

The capital stock of the Company is \$100,000, ten per centum of which is subject to immediate call.

It is hardly likely that the leading business men of Sioux City would be putting their money into this enterprise unless they saw pretty clearly a way of getting it out again.

A circular issued by the company indicates

#### THE PLAN.

The following is a quotation:

"We are now prepared to furnish transportation for men and supplies to the gold fields of Dakota by the shortest and most reliable route. The first train will leave Sioux City April 5th for Gordon City, and regularly thereafter. Gordon City will be located near the base of the mountains, at the nearest point to the mines, outside of the Indian reservations, and parties taking this route will have the advantage of a supply town near and always accessible. In addition to transportation, parties will be furnished board if desired. The route of this company lies through the state of Nebraska, and is an easily traveled, and safe as well as quick, route."

Fare, from \$25 to \$75. The first train will be piloted by John Gordon, who has been over the ground and is well acquainted with the country.

In 1865 Col. Sawyers, surveyed a government wagon road from this city to a point in Montana territory, passing along the eastern base of the Black Hills. His road is perhaps the basis of the Sioux City route; at least his survey has much to do with the knowledge that is possessed of the country to be traversed by the Sioux City and Black Hill Transportation company.

### THE TRAINS

will go directly west from Sioux City, bearing northward in Nebraska to the Niobrara river, and thence westward through the northern tier of counties to the nearest point to the southeast passes to the Black Hills. It will be seen by the quotation above that the company does not propose to operate in the Indian country; and right here is where advantage is claimed, under the circumstances, for the Sioux City route over all others. Aside from being located in a good country, considerable of which is occupied by settlers, with excellent grazing in season, plenty of wood and water, it nowhere approaches locations of hostile Indians, and is said to take the traveler to within forty or fifty miles of the hills before foot is set upon territory reserved for the noble red. The distance from Sioux City to Custer's Park, by this route, is placed at 350 miles. Gordon and Witcher in returning, by way of Yankton, traveled about 400 miles.

### THE PEOPLE OF YANKTON

have a route—several routes. They apprehend people might go there and take their choice. Just which they prefer is not clear.

The route most talked of in opposition to the Sioux City route, is what is called the Brule City route. The plan is to go to Yankton by rail, thence by river or otherwise to Brule City, a point on the east bank of the Missouri, opposite the mouth of White river, and there make up trains and proceed west on White river to the gold regions. The objection to this route is that it is nearly all the way from Yankton through Indian country, which makes it unpleasant in view of the opposition of both government and the government's wards. Fort Randall, as will be seen by reference to the map, is situated just above Yankton, and the gold seekers would first have to run the gauntlet of the troops there stationed. Then, again, by the recent executive order of Mr. Grant, Brule City, and a wide strip of country on the east bank of the Missouri, is attached to the Sioux reservation, which gives the government pretty full swing for

### DISCIPLINARY MEASURES

up that way. It is understood, of course, that all the country west of the Missouri in Dakota is part of that reservation, which makes the Black Hills question bothersome.

The distance from Yankton by the Niobrara route is not believed to be any less than the distance from Sioux City, while the location of the streams and character of the country are such that, in the spring of the

year particularly, the trip would be lengthened. However, the difference in distance can be no great consideration. The difference comes in the relative facilities offered by the two towns as outfitting points and in means of communication; and it may be mentioned in favor of Sioux City that it has the advantage of cutting off sixty-one miles of travel by rail, of being a larger town, and of having a well-settled country about it; important considerations, as men of experience will readily grant.

### WHAT THE GOVERNMENT IS GOING TO DO ABOUT IT.

It is pretty well understood that the army in truth is in favor of opening the Black Hills to white settlement. The military that has had to deal with Indian affairs up this way understand that the Black Hills are of no use to the reds, except as a place to which they may escape, and from which they may cry sacred soil, when they have been engaged in scalp-lifting, horse-stealing or other Indian-like pranks. The interior of the hills are hardly ever visited by them, and it may be said that there is really no worthy consideration for keeping the country in its present state. It is believed that the opening of the country, after the fashion of building the Pacific railroads would do much to

### SETTLE THE INDIAN PROBLEM

and relieve the Government of the burdens now borne in behalf of the untutored. In fact, it is believed, the government is not opposed to the movement, but that a notion that an Indian treaty must be held inviolate, in the estimation of the Indians, whatever the Indians may do on their part, is supposed to be the point that troubles them at Washington: and why it should, nobody can just understand.

However, the managers of the Sioux City and Black Hills Transportation Company take this view: That the government can only treat the gold-seekers as trespassers. Therefore, the military cannot interfere until it shall find the men on an Indian reservation. Therefore, again, that the men can reach "Gordon City" undisturbed, and that from thence they can shoot into the hills so lively and so variously, that either Louisiana or the Black Hills will have to be given up—probably the Black Hills any way. It is said, furthermore, that the whole history of these things is

### AGAINST THE GOVERNMENT,

and if men really want to go to the Black Hills, believing good reasons to exist for their going there, that it will be impossible to stay the tide.

The following extract from General Custer's report to the government will be found of interest.

"The discovery, however, of greatest importance, and to which I make special reference, was that of gold.

"It will be understood that within the limits of the Black Hills we were almost constantly marching, never halting at any one point for a longer period than one day, except one, and that was near Harney's Peak, where we remained five days, most of the command, however, being employed in operations during the halt. From this it will be seen that no satisfactory or conclusive examination of the country could be made

regarding its mineral deposits. Enough, however, was determined to establish the fact that gold is distributed throughout an extensive area within the Black Hills. Gold was obtained in numerous localities in what are termed gulches. No discoveries, so far as I am aware, were made of Gold deposits in quartz, although there is every reason to believe that a more thorough and extended search would have discovered it. No large nuggets were found; the examination, however, showed that a very even, if not a very rich, distribution of gold is to be found throughout entire valleys. In other words, the prospecting showed that while the miner may not in one painful of earth find nuggets of large size, or deposits of astonishing richness, to be followed by days and weeks of unrewarded labor, he may reasonably expect in certain localities to realize from every painful of earth a handsome return for his labor.

"While I feel satisfied that gold in satisfactory quantities can be obtained in the Black Hills, yet the hasty examination we were forced to make did not enable us to determine in any satisfactory degree the richness or extent of the gold deposits in that region. Seeking for gold was not one of the objects of the expedition, consequently we were but ill prepared to institute or successfully prosecute a search for it, even after we became aware of its existence in the country.

From the "Chicago Times" March 13th.

### THE GOLD FEVER.

From present indications, it appears very liable, that the country will witness an attack of the gold fever, such as has not been experienced since the days of '49 in California. Since the publication of the reports of Gen. G. A. Custer, to the army department, concerning the Black Hills, there has been a growing desire among a large class of persons to examine more thoroughly the resources of this region, which has been increased by the glowing accounts of the country, related by the two returning members of the Sioux City party of explorers, which made a trip to the gold hills during the present winter. Whatever may be the actual condition and wealth of the region, it has become very evident, that an army of treasure-seekers will go there the coming summer, and remain there until the theory of gold is either established or exploded.

The unusual depression in business circles everywhere, and the great number of men now unemployed, together with the fact, that the region can be reached comparatively easy from almost all portions of the country, will undoubtedly cause large numbers to seek the

### NEW FIELD OF PROMISE.

The Cheyenne correspondent of the Chicago "Tribune" writing from that city dated March 13th, says:

"Four more of the Black Hills miners, named Warren, McDonald, Williams, and Thomas arrived at Fort Laramie to-day, and have walked from the stockade 8 miles from Harney's Peak in seven days. They bring fine specimens of gold-dust with them. Warren has some that he washed out of two pans of dirt just below the surface showing grass roots in with the dust. He says they have only dug down to the bed-rock in one place. Water is so plentiful that a part of the time they worked waist-deep in it. He thinks that with pumps and hydraulics they can make \$100 a day to the man. He also brings with him specimens of silver that old miners state will yield \$2,000 to the ton; and say it is the finest they ever saw. He will bring it here to be assayed. He has fine specimens of plumbago, lead and copper. He says there is

more gypsum in the Black Hills than ten railroads could haul away in fifty years. He claims also that there are tin mines. The party leaves for Cheyenne to-morrow. Their object is to get provisions, machinery, tools, and recruit their numbers as much as possible, after which they will return from here, which they say is the only practicable route, it being so much nearer than Sioux City, and with good roads. They report no trouble in crossing streams nor in finding good water and camping ground every night. Warren says he can walk the distance easily in five days. Railroads have reduced the fare one-third from Chicago to Cheyenne to parties going to the Black Hills. Many strangers are now here who it is supposed are bound for the new El Dorado, notwithstanding orders from the Government prohibiting them from going. Parties just in from the Indian agencies state that the Indians are anxious to sell the Government their right to the Black Hills country, but don't propose to give it up without pay."

### GEN. GEO. A. FORSYTHE

of the Custer expedition further says: "The two miners we have with us tell me that they found 'color' in every pan of dirt they washed near Harney's Peak; that the diggings there, in Custer's gulch, will pay \$10 per day now; that they only had two or three days in which to prospect, as we kept moving so fast, but that in their opinion, when the eastern hills are rightly prospected, gold will be found there in abundance. I am inclined to think so, for the very roots of the grass would pan five cents to the pan in our camp near Harney's Peak."

Again from the CHICAGO TIMES.

### THE RETURNED MINERS.

"Eph Witcher, one of the members of the Sioux City expedition, who returned from the Black Hills recently, and who has caused a new excitement to spring up concerning the gold fields of Dakota, in consequence of the glowing accounts given of the results of his investigations and prospectings, is at present in the city, engaged in getting together a party for the Black Hills. He is accompanied and aided by Dave Harnett, an old Indian-fighter and guide, and Charles Collins, of Sioux City. A reporter of THE TIMES called upon the trio at their rooms in the Central hotel yesterday, and obtained such information as may be of interest to those persons who are bent upon doing the hills.

### EPH WITCHER,

the guide of the proposed party, is a young man, 26 years of age, who has been in the plains the greater portion of his life, and for a term of years worked in the gold mines of California. He is an intelligent fellow, and bears about him all the characteristics of a frontiersman. And the return trip from the hills made by him and Gordon, of Sioux City, show them both to be plucky. The trip itself was extremely hazardous in consideration of the fact that it was accomplished in the dead of winter, over a trackless region infested with a hostile tribe of Indians, when it was necessary that the means of subsistence should be carried along with them. The story of the

adventures of the party out to, and at the Black Hills, and the return journey of the two men, is interesting, and shows how completely the fever can control a certain class of men.

The representative of the "Times" found the three gentlemen who are organizing

#### THE PROPOSED EXPEDITION FROM CHICAGO,

at room 8, at the Central hotel, engaged in explaining their plans to a large party of persons, apparently desirous of reaching the gold region. During the day, somewhat over 200 persons called upon them, with a view of getting an idea of the cost of a trip, and to learn the obstacles that would be put in their way by the government troops and by the Sioux Indians. The following circular, which was recently published by the two members of the proposed expedition, in answer to letters of inquiry, concerning the proposed trip, pretty clearly explains their plans so far as matured:

DEAR SIR: In answer to your letter of inquiry would say we are enrolling names of those who desire to go out with the first expedition. The organization is not a public one, as we have no desire to have it talked up by or amongst any persons except those who desire to join it. We have, and are making all necessary preparations for a prompt start and a quick trip. We expect to make the trip in seven days from the Missouri river in order to know positively—so that all precautionary arrangements as to outfits, etc., may be made, we are enrolling members who desire to go. We are issuing membership tickets, \$5 per man, upon receipt of which membership certificate and other information is at once forwarded. We have no desire to correspond with any parties except those desiring to join us. As a guarantee of our responsibility and good faith in fulfilling our obligations, we refer by permission, to C. G. Wicker, Esq., capitalist and president of the Dakota Southern railroad, 90 Dearborn street, Chicago, Ill., and J. S. Meekling, superintendent of the Dakota Southern railroad, Sioux City, Iowa, and any of the leading business men of Sioux City.

EPH WITCHER,  
Guide of expedition.  
DANIEL HARNETT,  
Manager of expedition.

To ascertain some further facts concerning the intentions of the leaders of the Chicago expedition, the reporter engaged in

#### A CONVERSATION WITH MR. WITCHER.

Reporter.—What are your plans, as far as arranged?

Mr. Witcher.—We hope to leave Chicago about the 15th of April, and proceed direct to Yankton, where we will take a steamer up the Missouri to a point which we do not desire to mention, in order to escape the vigilance of the military, provided they attempt to interfere with us.

R.—Do you anticipate any trouble with the Indians or soldiers?

Mr. W.—No, sir. It is not at all likely that the Sioux will interfere with us in any manner as they know well enough that should they do so, they will lose all chance of receiving an indemnity from the government for trespassing on their territory. Again, as we hope to have 1,000 well-armed men in our expedition, there is no party of Indians that will be likely to attack us. Mr. Harnett, who is to accompany us, is known all along the

frontier as an Indian-fighter, and also knows nearly all the chiefs of the Sioux nation. He is also well acquainted with the country, and there is little or nothing to fear from the reds. So far as the soldiers are concerned, we do not believe that any active steps will be taken to retard our progress to the hills, provided any great number purposes to go out. In the first place, the officers are in sympathy with the movement being made, and it can be readily seen, that it will require a very large army to surround and protect the region, and the government, rather than incur the needless expense of sustaining a large body of troops will rather purchase the right to enter the hills of the Sioux, who have stated that for the sum of \$25,000 they will allow the country to be opened.

R.—What condition do you exact in allowing a person to join your expedition?

Mr. W.—A person must pay the sum of \$5 for a membership ticket, for which we agree to see to the transportation of his goods, and guide him across the country. We do this, to insure that the men who join really mean to go out with us. We have made arrangements with the railroad companies to carry us up the river from the latter city. It will be necessary for each person to purchase a pony at Yankton, where he will have no trouble in securing one, as great herds are continually being driven into this place. The ponies will be transported up the river to the point of landing.

R.—What will be the necessary outfit for a person in order to make the trip.

Mr. W.—Two men should club together. It will be necessary for them to purchase two ponies and a pack-horse, and provide themselves with provisions to last for a month. Each man should secure his blankets, guns, revolvers, ammunition and mining tools in this city. By careful figuring, a man can start from the point on the Missouri river, where we will take him, with his horse and provisions to last a month, for \$75 or \$100. There will be, besides this, his fare out, and whatever he may see fit to purchase in the way of firearms etc.

R.—What success have you met so far in securing men to join the expedition?

Mr. W.—Already 150 have joined the expedition from this city. I think this number would be much greater, had it been known more widely that we were in this city. What we want is 1,000 men, and no more, to make the trip, but if this number is not raised, we shall go anyhow. We must get a force of men into the hills as soon as possible, in order to protect the boys that are there already, from the Indians. Even if no more persons should join the expedition, I have already 100 trusty men who will go with me even if we have to go at dead of night, and travel every mile of the way at night in order to keep out of the way of the soldiers.

R.—What success did you have while prospecting in the hills?

Mr. W.—Owing to the cold weather, and having no quicksilver, we could do but little in mining and washing. Here are some specimens of blossom rock and float rock, and quartz, showing gold. (The specimens shown

are genuine, and experts who have examined them state that they are rich in ore.)

R.—In what portion of the hills did you prospect?

Mr. W.—In Custer gulch. We discovered where Gen. Custer had prospected, and went to work at the same place. We also prospected all along the gulch, which is between five and six miles in length, and found the indications good at almost every point.

R.—Will you go to any other cities before leaving for the hills?

Mr. W.—We hardly know as yet. We were approached by several capitalists today, who desired us to go to New York, but we have not the time to make the trip. We may go to St. Louis, but it is very likely that we shall return immediately to Sioux City, as soon as we get through here. We must go to Yankton as soon as possible to make the necessary preparations for the trip.

R.—Is there any truth in the report that the men now in the hills are suffering for food?

Mr. W.—There is no truth in the report. The men have sufficient food to last them until May or June. The only danger that threatens them is that of the Indians, who may attack them, if a sufficient force does not get into the hills before the savages begin moving in the spring.

R.—How long do you anticipate that it will take you to reach the hills after leaving the river?

Mr. W.—Between 18 and 20 days. I do not actually think it will take over 10 days, but we want to beat our time. We intend to get into the hills before any other party. We will take a light load, and make the trip as quick as possible.

The reporter also had a short conversation with

#### DAVE HARNETT,

who has been upon the plains the greater portion of his life. He was with Kit Carson, when that celebrated hunter made a trip through Dakota in '57. In relating the circumstance, Harnett stated that they went from old Fort Laramie to the South fork, through what is known as the Big Woods. They found good prospects from the south to the North fork of the Big Cheyenne. They then crossed that stream, and traveled northwest to the Powder river, and followed it up to its head waters, and then went down the base of the Big Horn country, and found gold-bearing quartz throughout the whole region. Harnett states that his only idea in going out, and in wanting a large party to accompany them, is to hold the country from the Indians. He knows that he can make from \$10 to \$25 a day wherever he prospected. He proposes to go through with the first party, and feels that they can beat the time stated for the trip. He also informed the reporter that the traveling would be comparatively good, and that during the trip but few rivers would have to be forded.

It is the present intention of the originators of the expedition to return to Sioux City some time during the middle of next week.

### How to Reach the Hills.

To those who propose to go to the Black Hills, a knowledge of the shortest and cheapest route will be of interest. Naturally, for self-protection, every one will join one of the expeditions now being formed, which, so far as learned, will start from Yankton or Sioux City. From Chicago a person may take passage over the Illinois Central or Chicago and North-western railroads to Sioux City, where a number of expeditions are being formed. From the latter city a person can proceed over the Dakota Southern railroad to Yankton, and take the Missouri river steamers to any point that he may desire, from which to proceed to the hills.

#### TAKING HARNEY'S PEAK AS AN OBJECTIVE POINT

In the hills, it has been ascertained that the following are the distances from the most important frontier points:

	Miles
From Bismark to Harney's peak.....	251
From North Platte, Neb., to Harney's peak.....	224
From Fort Pierre, Dakota, to Harney's peak.....	161
From Cheyenne, Wyoming, to Harney's peak.....	191
From Fort Randall, Dakota, to Harney's peak.....	138
From Brule City, Dakota, to Harney's peak.....	192

Of the six starting-points, the managers of the expedition from this city consider the route via Brule City to be altogether the most feasible. The following are the distances and passenger rates to the three principal points:

	Miles.	Fare.
Chicago to Bismark, Dakota.....	1,000	\$38 50
Chicago to Cheyenne, Wyoming.....	1,100	47 00
Chicago to Yankton, Dakota.....	500	21 45

To reach Brule City, it is necessary to take the boat from Yankton up the river. When the government decides upon opening up the country, there will of course be thrown open to the public a number of feasible routes. As the Dakota Southern railroad at the present time approaches nearer to the hills than any other, a reporter of THE TIMES waited upon Mr. C. C. Wicker, president of that road, in order to ascertain what steps were being taken to transport people to the hills. Mr. Wicker stated that at the opening of navigation, which would occur very soon, steamers would leave Yankton daily for Brule City, and old Fort Pierre, from both of which places the railroad company would have a line of stages running direct to the gold fields 15 days after the government grants them the right to go through. Mr. Wicker estimates the expense in this instance as follows:

Chicago to Yankton.....	\$26 65
To Brule City.....	6 00
To the hills.....	14 00
Total.....	\$46 65

This estimate includes 80 pounds of baggage for each passenger free. At the present time, in consequence of the intention of Gen. Sheridan to keep miners out of the hills, the railroad company will not be permitted to put on its line of stages, and from the Missouri river, min is will be compelled to pick their way to the hills the best they may. The

#### QUESTION OF EXPENSE.

will also have to be considered, and it cannot be ascertained easily. The following estimate has been carefully prepared, but it is not meant for a quick and rapid trip. The estimate is for an outfit of six men, including three months' provisions, with prices at which they can be procured at Sioux City or Yankton:

Two yoke oxen (or span of mules).....	\$225 00
Wagon.....	90 00
12 sacks flour.....	24 00
450 lbs bacon.....	54 00
Coffee.....	27 00
Sugar.....	18 00
12 pairs blankets.....	35 00
6 picks.....	9 00
6 gold pans.....	3 00
Rifles (6) Henry, Ballard, Winchester, or Remington.....	190 00
Ammunition.....	50 00
6 shovels.....	9 00
Incidentals.....	20 00
Total for six men.....	\$754 00
Per man.....	125 50



Very much could be added to the above, but which would not be absolutely essential. Another estimate has been prepared, which is for four men:

Four Horses.....	\$ 40
Two Ponies.....	100
One Wagon .....	150
Harness.....	50
Wagon cover.....	50
Cooking implements.....	25
Provisions for two months.....	240

Total.....	\$1,015
Per man, about.....	250

The estimate made for a quick trip, however is as follows, for two persons:

Two ponies.....	\$100
One pack horse.....	60
Provisions for one month.....	40
Kit of mining tools.....	10
Two rifles.....	40
Ammunition.....	15

Total.....	\$285
Per man.....	142

#### FROM BISMARCK TO THE BLACK HILLS.

What an old Frontiersman, who has traveled over all the Routes, knows about it.

BISMARCK, D. T., Oct. 10, 1874.

*Editor Bismarck Tribune:*

So many refer to me for information concerning the Black Hills, that with your indulgence, I will give a brief sketch of the several routes suggested, and make such comparisons as seem to be called for to further the interests of those who at an early day will seek the "New Eldorado."

Let me premise, however, by saying that I am familiar with all the routes, having been engaged for the last seventeen years in trading with the Indians, or freighting for the Government in connection with the Indians. I have traveled over all of the routes mentioned; have been on every side of the Black Hills, and through them, having accompanied Custer's expedition on his recent trip.

The route from Yankton passes immediately over the Sioux reservation, and in close proximity to several large Indian agencies; and the road from the Forks of the White River to Custer's Gulch will be extremely tedious on account of the dreaded bad lands through which it passes.

From Columbus, one would encounter an immense sand desert, lying between the head of the Loup and the Niobrara rivers, with no wood and a great scarcity of water; besides the route runs through the Pawnee reservation. After reaching and crossing the Niobrara, great sand hills, devoid of vegetation, stretch northward to the White River; and from White River on to the Black Hills the "Mauvaises Terres," which are both dangerous and difficult, will be found.

From Cheyenne to Fort Laramie the road is excellent; but from the latter place to Red Cloud's agency, one would again encounter those desolate sand hills, running west, through which it is almost impossible to take a loaded wagon. Beyond Red Cloud's agency the country is very broken, and overrun by hostile Indians at all seasons of the year. This route also traverses the Sioux reservation from south to north, passing through Red Cloud's agency, and within fifty miles of Spotted

Tail's agency. No other route can be had from Cheyenne, except via Fort Petteerman, which is fully as bad if not worse than by Red Cloud.

The route from Bozeman, by way of the abandoned old forts, is a good one—a wagon route, well defined, covering a greater portion of the distance.

The route from Bozeman, via the mouth of Tongue River, although covering an unexplored country, and holding out great inducements to prospectors, will be found difficult, and perhaps impracticable, for wagons, between the Yellowstone and Little Missouri.

The route from Bismarck to the Black Hills is much nearer than the route from any point: one hundred and seventy-five miles nearer than from Cheyenne, on the Union Pacific, and one hundred and fifty miles nearer than from Columbus, Nebraska. This route is over a country well watered, and furnishing good grazing. Between Bismarck and the Black Hills there is not a foot of bad lands; besides it passes over neutral ground, ground not occupied or claimed by the Indians. It is as safe from Indian attacks as is the country between Bismarck and Fargo.

Many routes have been mentioned, but absolutely none present the advantages offered by the Bismarck route. At Bismarck complete outfits can be secured and at a low rate as at any point on the Missouri river.

It should be borne in mind that there are already two trails from Bismarck to the Black Hills, made by Custer's expedition; that a score or more of citizens of Bismarck accompanied the Black Hills expedition, who are familiar with the route, many of whom will accompany an expedition from Bismarck to the Hills as soon as the Government will consent to the occupancy.

I feel warranted in saying that this will be done in spring, and that the abandoned forts in the Yellowstone country will be reoccupied.

JOHN W. SMITH.

#### LATEST FROM WASHINGTON.

March 17th, extract from dispatch sent by command of Gen. Sherman, to Gen. Ord, at Omaha: "Efforts are now being made to arrange for the extinguishment of the Indian title, and all proper means will be used to accomplish that end."

By command of Gen. Sherman,  
WILLIAM C. WHITPLE,  
Assistant Adjutant General.  
ALSO.

Washington, D. C., March 17. — Secretary Delano has taken steps to bring to this city a delegation of Sioux Indians, for the purpose of negotiating for the extinguishment of their right to the Black Hills country, with a view to opening up the same to settlement.

Having thus fulfilled our promise of giving our readers more information on this all-absorbing topic than can be collected from any one source, pointing out to them the various routes to the gold fields from the different points, each one of which undoubtedly possesses its own peculiar advantages, we must leave them to make their own selections.

PUBLISHED BY

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